

THE FIRST SHIPS

EARLY WELLINGTON FLAGSHIP OF THE FLEET A TROUBLED VOYAGE

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COMING OF THE ADELAIDE

The personnel of the directorate of the New Zealand Company had looked upon the Adelaide as the most important vessel of the five first ships dispatched with emigrants to New Zealand. She was not only the largest, but carried the greatest number of emigrants, besides conveying to the colony some of the more important office-bearers of the company, all these entitled her to be referred to as the flagship of the fleet. She was comparatively, a large teak-built vessel, specially constructed to take troops out to India, and was at this time commanded by Captain William Campbell, who had with him as chief mate a Mr. Pryce, while Dr. John Johnston was the ship's medical officer on the voyage to New Zealand. In the cabin there were thirty-six passengers, while elsewhere 140 emigrants were accommodated. It will be seen that the voyage was a most disappointing one. After leaving Falmouth roadstead on 30th September, 1839, the Bay of Biscay was crossed, a course then being set between the island of Madeira and the African Coast, the Island of Tenerife being reached on the 14th October, where at Santa Cruz, the vessel remained two days, all the voyagers being given a run ashore; one half of them on the first day, the other half on the following. The cabin passengers gave a banquet at Richardson's Hotel to the British Consul, Mr. Bartlett, the chair being taken by Dr. G. S. Evans, and many complimentary things were said.

Departure was made on the 16th., the Line being crossed on the 14th November when the vessel was taken so far out of her course as to sight the Martin Pass Islands, 600 miles off the coast of Brazil. Meanwhile a great deal of unpleasantness had broken out on board, both in the saloon and steerage, and continued for practically the whole voyage. History has carefully veiled who or what was responsible for this, but the responsibility would appear to lie with a gentleman of means taking advantage of cheap passage money obtained by travelling there, and assuming airs and authority over his travelling companions he was not entitled to. The whole ship was in such an uproar that Dr. Evans persuaded Captain Campbell to put into Cape Town, which was reached on the 20th December, 1839, where a stay of eleven days was made. While here it was learned that the H.M.S. Druid, conveying Captain Hobson to New Zealand, had spoken "all well" just six weeks before. The Cape was left early on New Year's Day, the vessel passing later to the south of Van Dieman's Land, and on the 1st March the high lands of the South Island were sighted, and three days later the harbour of Port Hardy was entered. Here MacLaren, the whaler (who resided at Port Hardy in the summer months) gave them the usual directions, and sail was at once made, and at the close of the day on the 7th March, and in company with the Tory, returning from her unsuccessful mission to establish a settlement at Hokianga, and the New Zealand Company's store-ship Glenbervie, from London, made port after a voyage of 171 days, in the midst of a storm of rain, thunder, and lightning, dropping anchor off the Maori village of Hikoikoi. It was now quite dark, but Dr. Evans decided to go ashore and meet Colonel Wakefield; so obtaining the ship's boat and the service of some emigrants who had experience of handling such craft, proceeded ashore with one or two other cabin passengers, amongst whom was the wife of Captain William Mein Smith. They made a wet landing on Petone beach, and for the time being were quite lost amongst the sandhills, until at length they saw distant lights and were soon heartily greeted by their friends. The following morning a grand salute was fired by all the ships in

honour of the two new arrivals, followed by three Maori canoes racing around the squadron of six ships amidst the thunder of the guns, the paddlers vigorously vociferating their own songs.

SETTLERS FLOODED OUT

The passengers then landed to find the low-lying lands flooded to a depth of two or three feet with the settlers taking refuge on the elevated portions. In the meanwhile, Dr. Evans and other had visited the southern part of the harbour, and emphatically declared against the location of the principal settlement at Petone, followed by Dr. Evans taking up such a strong attitude respecting the matter that after deliberation Colonel Wakefield acquiesced and returned to his original idea of having the settlement at Thorndon. During the few days that now elapsed a fair amount of cargo had been discharged from the Adelaide; this however was stored there, further discharge was stopped, and with all of her passengers aboard she made over to Thorndon Bay, where she anchored, and landed her living freight in the ship's boats on the beach that then existed in front of the Hotel Cecil. This historic site, marking as it does the landing of the first of the company's settlers at Wellington, who spread themselves out along Lambton beach to as far as Te Aro foreshore, was soon afterwards the site of the Commercial Wharf, and also where the two governors, Captain Hobson and Fitzroy, stepped ashore. As this part of the harbour lands had not been surveyed, Colonel Wakefield arranged for the settlers to reside for a time on certain allotments apportioned to them, and they were soon busy erecting, with the help of Natives of Pipitea Pa, wharves and such like primitive dwellings. A good many of the immigrants took advantage of the privilege of sleeping aboard the Adelaide for two or three weeks, being rowed ashore in the morning and conveyed back at the end of the day. Mr William Luxford, who had suffered an injury to his leg, was prevented from landing for some little while.

TRIBAL WARFARE

We have now given an account of the voyages out, and first experiences of the officers and settlers of the New Zealand Company to these shores. From the arrival of the Tory, on the 20th September, 1839, to the arrival of the Adelaide, on the 7th March, 1840, a total of 854 passengers and emigrants had been introduced to Port Nicholson, while other ships followed in quick succession brought hundreds more, creating an impression in the Native mind that the whole population of England would soon be here. We must now bring this account to a close by giving a brief description of the appearance of the place as it was found by these settlers, described by one writer, who had in mind the primitive condition of the Native inhabitants, that it perhaps resembled the state of Britain when it was invaded by the Romans in 41 A.D. The account which now follows is largely drawn from a paper written in 1879 by Major Charles Heaphy, V.C., who was here in the Tory in 1839. When the Tory arrived, the Natives were known as Ngatiawa, were a fine specimen of the Maori race, much superior to those in the Queen Charlotte Sounds. All the men were tried warriors, and had fought successively the Waikato, the Wanganui and the Wairarapa people; but they occupied rather an inconvenient corner of territory. As long as they could maintain peace with the Ngatitua at Porirua, and the Ngati-raukawa at Otaki, they were tolerably safe; but in the event of hostilities from the West Coast, the Wairarapa people, whom they had defeated, but not subdued, could operate in their rear, and so create a critical position. It was this feeling of insecurity which caused them so readily to sell their land to Colonel Wakefield, and to hail the arrival of Europeans. Their head chief, Te Puni, never receded from the bargain he had made; the trouble experienced at the Hutt commencing in the middle of 1842, and culminating in 1846, were the work of invading rebels from the Pororua and Whanganui districts, and during these time Te Puni extended the protection of the tribe over the Port Nicholson settlers.

The picture that was presented to the wondering eyes of the settlers, so used to the soft and pleasant outlines of their native England, was a bold and striking one. Here was vast sheet of water, completely land-locked, with two small rocky isles rising near the centre, and backed by rugged little hills clothed with forest. Nothing could surpass the beauty of the scene when viewed from an eminence on a sunny day, the harbour here and there fringed with patches of white sandy beach, looking like a big blue lake sparkling in the sun and embosomed in deep hills. Along the eastern shore, from the mouth of the Hutt River to beyond Ward Island, the forest was uninterrupted, the trees overhanging the water, have shelter to great numbers of wildfowl.

THE HUTT RIVER AS IT WAS

A voyage up the river was most interesting and picturesque. It was much narrower and deeper than it is now, as the whole of the valley was under forest, the banks were protected from scour, and the flood waters being kept back, ran more gradually. A pa stood at the mouth of the river on the eastern side, large war canoes were to be seen drawn up on the beach, while at the foot of the hills were tall stages, from which hung great quantities of fish, drying in the sun, for the consumption of the Natives living in various kainga. The banks of the river carried lofty pine trees, while the foliage at their foot, with the abundant white clematis hanging in graceful folds from the upper branches, made a scene superb to behold. Here and there would be a patch of Native cultivations, containing potato, turnip, cabbage, or pumpkin, while the winding river bends were the home of the grey duck, teal, and numerous other wildfowl. As seen from a height, a lofty pine forest appeared to occupy the whole length and breadth of the valley of the Hutt, only broken by the blue ribbon of the river, having in its upper reaches a white stony margin. The forest commenced about one mile from the beach, the intervening space, where Petone now is, being a sandy flat, with numerous hillocks covered with vegetation, with here and there a flax marsh or raupo swamp. About the Lower Hutt and Taiti the bush was so thick it would take a good axeman quite a day to clear a space large enough to pitch a tent.

ABUNDANT BIRD LIFE

The bird life was wonderfully profuse especially the bell-bird, and there were thousands of these, their beautiful melody sung in concert in the early part of the morning was like a peal of bells running down octaves. Other birds were the tui, thrush, pied-fantail, wren, white-head, grey warbler, saddle-back and wood robin. In the shallows and lagoon at the mouth of the river was an enormous number of water-fowl, such as shags, wild-duck, oyster-catchers, plovers, sand-pipers, curlew, and red-legged waders, and so tame it was slaughter rather than sport to shoot them.

Lowry Bay was a delightful place, the large trees overhanging the beach, while out in its waters the Natives made big hauls of kahuwau, moki, and flounder. At the eastern end of the Petone beach was the Maori village of Pito—one where the principal chief of Port Nicholson resided namely, Te Puni, with some 100 Natives. At Nga-uranga and Kai-wharawhara the beach was not then raised, the trees overhanging the hills descended to the water, and only at the ebb of tide was a narrow pathway.

The site of Thorndon was fairly clear, but what remained of the former bush were but scattered tree trunks, and they were fairly plentiful, with here and there a great deal of Manuka (tea-tree) scrub, but towards the Tinakori road there were many high trees, while the steep slopes of the hill were heavily timbered, with the red-flowering rata conspicuous.

BUSH ON WELLINGTON TERRACE

Wellington terrace, to perhaps as far as the Jewish Synagogue, was covered with native trees quite forty feet high, but beyond this it was bare and utilised by the aborigines for potato cultivations. From the bottom of Woodward street where was the Maori village of Kumu-toto, swept away in the big fire of 1842, to as far as the rocky cliff at Willis street, the beach was so narrow it could not be negotiated at high water, so sites for buildings had to be dug from the face of the cliff washed by the sea, while at the point opposite the Bank of New Zealand was a short reef of rocks. At the Te Aro end the flat was covered with high fern, tutu, rush, flax. And a great deal of impassable swamp. The Basin Reserve was a deep morass with an outlet to the seat Clyde-quay, and to get to Newtown one had to keep to the high land to either side of the wide valley. A description of the many Native settlements should be given, but space will not permit.

At the beach, the head of Evan's Bay, were to be found waterfowl, with flocks of Paradise duck, and growing behind the beach was a quantity of wild turnip (horuhoru), alleged to have been grown from degenerated seed left on the New Zealand coast by Captain Cook. In the low fern and sandy shores of Lyall and Island Bays the indigenous quail was very common and would rise in hundreds at one's foot with their shrill startling whistle. Along the rocks would be found slate-coloured cranes, two by two, making erratic darts after shrimps, or patiently waiting for a passing fish.

At this time the Native population of Port Nicholson, extending from the Hutt to Te Aro, was not more than 500, but by 1845 it had increased to 1000, the additional numbers being invading rebels from Porirua and Whanganui, who were soon driven away from the Hutt by Governor Grey and his troops in 1846.

THE WAKEFIELDS

We will now conclude this narrative with a short reference to the two members of the Wakefield family, to whom is largely due the foundation of the capital city of New Zealand. Edward Gibbon Wakefield, the visionary prime mover in the colonisation of New Zealand, had for a period of more than ten years devoted his whole time to the subject of building a Colonial Empire. The noblest mission of the British race. In 1829 he began to write anonymously on the subject, essay after essay, and pamphlet after pamphlet, arresting the attention of influential men, and enlisting their sympathy and support to his schemes, whereby the waste lands of new countries after being acquired, should be sold as a uniform price, and the proceeds applied to introducing to them the surplus population of Great Britain, with an even balance being preserved between land, capital, and labour. The result was the formation of the New Zealand Association of 1837, and the New Zealand Land Company two years later, during which time the scheme met with the bitter opposition of the British Government, and the powerful Church Missionary Society of London, and yet the movement proceeded apace. What Sir Walter Raleigh was to colonization in the 16th century, so was Gibbon Wakefield in the 19th and it is doubtful if in the years to come, any two names will loom larger in the history of Great Britain.

Wakefield's name is intimately associated with the history of Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. He spent the last years of his life here, a worn-out man, but the glamour of political life was too strong for him, and, as a member for the Hutt in 1853, his strenuous exertions brought on a recurrence of his English illness, lasting eight years, and he died in Wellington in a small house on the old Government House grounds on the 16th May 1862. His remains lie in the city's old cemetery, the stone over his grave merely recording his name, with the dates of his birth and death. Colonel William Hayward Wakefield had been an English soldier and seen much service in Spain and Portugal during the Civil Wars of 1832-6. In the New Zealand movement, he had been variously associated with his eldest brother prior to coming out to New Zealand in 1839. He continued residing at Wellington as chief director of the New Zealand Company, until his sudden death at his residence in the Government House Domain on the 19th September, 1848, in his 45th year. He was undoubtedly a man of action, possessing great self-possession and courage, and wielded a great deal of influence, and in the early days kept society together in a way that could not have been done by an ordinary man. In appearance he was of medium height, compactly built, fair of complexion, and of Saxon features. His remains lie with those of his famous brother in the old Wellington cemetery.

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